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The Reformed Journal

A PERIODICAL OF REFORMED COMMENT AND OPINION

The Fear of the Curse HARRY R. BOER

Jesus' Secret HUGH A. KOOPS

Infallibility 1961 MARVIN HOOGLAND

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Editorial on Federal Aid to Education; Thanksgiving Day Prayers; Letters on Anti-Communism; Book Reviews

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The Reformed Journal

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NOVEMBER 1961

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In Memoriam

The world being wont to pause upon the death of one great man, to mourn mankind's loss, how much more appropriate it is that we this day do pause to mourn the loss of those who but for the explosion of the Khrushchev Bomb yesterday, might have lived out their useful lives.

By the unnumbered hundreds of thousands they now will not do so. They will die before their time. They will carry on beneath the burdens of incurable disease they otherwise never would have had. Others will be born with infirmities that never would have been visited upon them. Yea, some born even a thousand years from now, will bear the mark of this beast, fresh sprung from the Siberian wastes to plant its mark upon the naked flesh of man.

Such a loss is beyond the genius of men to measure or to count. Who knows how many presidents, party chairmen, statesmen, diplomats, poets, scientists and philosophers will be cut off. Suffice it to say that this bereavement exceeds any bereavement deriving from any single act of man or any isolated natural phenomena. Such is our loss. Let us mourn those who will do for the world less than they might have done; those who will be deprived by lifelong afflictions of the power to do anything at all; those who will go unborn. The misfortune of such a loss inflicted in the heat of wartime passion is difficult to bear; how infinitely more difficult it is to bear when it is dealt deliberately to the most unoffending victims in time of peace.

The terrible deed is irretrievably done and cannot be undone. Retrospective bitterness will be as useless as prospective petition has been. Nothing can repair the dread consequences of this day or make whole those who but for it would have lived out the fullness of their lives. It is too late to do more than mourn this loss; but it is not too late to find in this misfortune new resolve that such a blasphemy against creation must not be repeated.

—Reprinted from *The Washington Post*, Tuesday, October 24, 1961.

As We See It

READY TO DECIDE — WISELY?

The question of Federal Aid to Education has been left open for another year. This becomes, then, a year of grace. We may waste it or we may put it to good use.

Supposing that a federal aid bill had been passed last summer, and supposing it had contained provision for some form of grants, perhaps tuition certificates, to Christian school pupils. I venture the guess that this fall would have been a time of hasty and not too thorough decision-making by many Christian school boards. To take or not to take? There would have been voices on both sides and some in the middle. There might have been emergency meeting of school societies, emotional appeals, vigorous speeches, and perhaps disgruntled minorities.

Have we escaped all this, or have we but postponed it to another year? Depends on us, doesn't it?

It may be that the Christian school community has pretty well made up its mind on this question, and then my guess above is a poor one, and my suggestion that follows is unnecessary. But if the community has come to something like one mind on this subject, I could not tell you what that mind is in the Society to which we belong. Could you for yours?

This is a year of grace, then. Let us use it as one.

Should we not, as societies, boards, and communities, be addressing ourselves by means of committees, panels, meetings, pamphlets, discussion, to every facet and aspect of this immensely important question? Is there any other question of like import for the next quarter century? Federal money *is* coming! If it goes only to the public schools, that in itself cannot be ignored, for the taxes will be shared by ourselves, while at the same time our schools fall, or threaten to fall, ever farther behind in the ratio of teacher salaries, pedagogical facilities, scholarships, opportunities.

Everyone should know, then, with the certainty that comes from careful exploration, what his own mind on the subject is, and why he holds it. He should know both sides. He should know the Canadian and the Dutch experience. He should grasp the principles involved. He should appreciate the challenges and threats. He should be prepared, in short, to give the kind of account for his vote on this significant issue that its long-range effects demand. If this is not Priority One for all who hold Christian education dear — whether they favor or oppose federal aid in the long run — then it is certainly very close to the top.

This *Journal* can, and will, offer continuing discussion of this subject. But the leadership of the Christian school community, locally and regionall, will perform great service to parents and friends of our schools, especially those whose work-a-day chores lead them far from sustained study of articles and reports, if meetings are arranged and bulletins prepared, *not* to propagandize on either side but to make enlightened decision simpler to come by.

That the Congress did not act this year is our opportunity to act for ourselves.

Will we?

—L.D.K.

The Fear of the Curse:

Characteristics of a Church Emerging from Paganism

by Harry R. Boer

IN THIS AND IN A FOLLOWING ARTICLE, I WISH TO make some observations on remnants of paganism in the life of the Younger Churches. I do not in so doing mean to suggest that there are no remnants of paganism in the life of the Older Churches. The pagan in us will never be completely resolved till death makes us holy indeed. But one can say that in the Younger Churches the paganism that comes to expression is more raw, less disguised, and certainly less sophisticated than the educated and secularized paganism found in Western Christianity. It is with the more recognizable form that I am at present concerned.

That this paganism exists few will deny who have some acquaintance with the life of the Younger Churches. What is often not seen, however, is the profundity of its dimension. What is generally (and often condescendingly) written off as "superstition" is, in fact, a whole philosophy of life, a conception of existence, by which the majority of men have lived since man first fell away from God. This comes to expression nowhere more clearly than in the power which the curse (as feared rather than as perpetrated) continues to exercise for the pagan-become-Christian. It is on this point that I want to concentrate in this article. In a subsequent essay I want to deal with legalism and moralism as characteristics in the life of the Younger Churches. But first it is necessary to make some relevant theological observations as an introduction to both subjects.

WHEN A MAN BECOMES A CHRISTIAN, HIS REGENeration and conversion alter basically not only his relationship to God but also his relationship to his own past. He becomes a *new* creature, a *new* man in Christ. *Old* things have passed away, all has become *new*. The biblical concepts of *old* and *new*, *then* and *now*, *once* and *now*, the *no longer* of the old aeon and the *not yet* of the new, are freighted with profound significance for the man who makes the transition from unbelief to faith. At the same time, regeneration and conversion are *events* which do not immediately effect all that is implicit in them. They are a birth with the promise of a life, but they must be followed by growth. This growth we call sanctification. But the very word sanctification implies the existence of the old alongside the new. The new is the basic thing in the process of sanctification. The old, however great its present power and claims, is an essentially incidental thing which must be lived with for awhile but which will one day be done away with altogether. Nevertheless, it is there and it will always powerfully color the Christian situation, wheresoever and whensoever, in this dispensation.

Applying this general principle to the situation of the pagan-become-Christian, we can more specifically describe his transition from his former to his present life in these terms: he abandons the naturalistic cyclic form of existence and he enters upon the redemptive historical order of existence. This wants a bit of explanation.

The naturalistic cyclic form of existence is characteristic of all paganism. In its simplest terms it means that life is regarded as an unending round of the same basic events which have no eventual consummate purpose or goal. It is, if we may so put it, a life without an eschatology. Birth, growth, begetting, decadence, death; sowing and reaping; the rounds of the seasons endlessly going on; conquest and defeat; rise and fall; often, reincarnation — this is the cyclic movement of life which the author of Ecclesiastes caught so well:

> What has been is what will be, and what has been done will be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything of which it is said, "See, this is new"? It has been already in the ages before us.

Now this form of naturalistic cyclic movement of life is characterized by a widely varied religious content. This content arises from a common and basic factor which we may designate as *religious fantasy*. It is the fantasy or imagination which is generated by the faith capacity of man. Man's fall into sin did not deprive him of his faith capacity. It made it normless and turned it into a channel for the expression of the inexhaustible religious strivings of the human spirit, conjuring up from within the depths of the spirit ideas, images, concepts, hopes, fears, longings, and creating securities and defenses in the form of gods, idols, spirits, charms, myth and ritual in all the endless forms of which the religious fantasy of a creature made in the image of the infinite God, but fallen, is capable. This is what Paul had in mind when he said that the gentiles became futile in their thinking, their senseless minds were darkened, and that God gave them up to a base mind (Romans 1:21,28).

It is in this cyclic movement of existence, qualified by its characteristic religious content, that the pagan-become-Christian had his former spiritual home.

This existence he has left to enter upon an existence of a wholly different character. Regeneration and conversion usher him out of the sphere of naturalistic cyclic movement into the sphere of redemptive history. Life is now no longer a constant round of ever recurring events, but it is an historical movement with eschatological purpose and consummation. It is a movement forward and onward leading *recta linea* to the eternal kingdom of God. Suddenly the convert enters upon a new framework of existence — the framework of spiritual *progress* with all its implications for development, change, and newness in the here and now of his everyday life.

The new form of redemptive historical existence is, like the naturalistic cyclic movement of existence, religiously qualified. As the qualification of the latter was faith gone wrong, so the qualification of the new order is faith restored to its rightful function. The object of faith is now no longer the conjurings and imaginations of the mind of fallen man, but the world of objective reality given in God's redemptive revelation of which Christ Jesus is the integrating center. The world of vanity has been left behind and the world of abiding worth has been entered. The futility of a treadmill existence has been abandoned and a new life of progress whose destiny is the eternal City of God has been embraced.

But again, the new life is here only in principle. Regeneration and conversion have been effected, but sanctification stands only at the beginning. The naturalistic cyclic movement of existence continues right alongside of and intertwined with the redemptive historical movement forward in Christ. We have therefore in the pagan-become-Christian a clinically beautiful example of the *old* order of existence qualified by religious fantasy wedded to the *new* order of existence qualified by true faith. This creates tensions as the struggle between the old man and the new man creates in every form of Christian existence.

To understand this conjunction of the two aeons as they bear upon the life of the Younger Churches constitutes a measurable step toward the understanding of the life of those Churches. These introductory remarks may serve to indicate how great is the transition from paganism to Christianity and how utterly profound is the dimension which the life of the old order continues to play in the life of the new order. The pagan-become-Christian is *no longer* the true child of naturalistic religious fantasy, but he is also *not yet* in full possession of the liberty and the truth with which Christ has made him free. Faith has come, but it has not yet been perfected; sanctification has been begun, but it has not yet been completed. The new birth has taken place, but the life it has brought into being must in the way of God's providence struggle onward and upward through many trials to the achieving of the stature of the fulness of Christ.

THE MARCH 28 ISSUE OF *Look Magazine* WAS LARGELY devoted to Africa and its problems. In it a missionary of the Roman Catholic White Fathers is quoted as saying, "It will take another generation or two before we have fully eradicated paganism and superstition from the minds of our African converts. It still conditions their outlook on the world." This is, I feel, an unwarrantedly optimistic statement. It would be better to say that it will take a number of generations before the world of old ideas is "fully eradicated." In fact, the eradication will never be a complete one. Consider how we "unsuperstitious" people of the West have all kinds of remnants of paganism still with us, and not very sophisticated remnants either. I need only refer to the ready references we make to good and ill omens, good or bad luck, broken mirrors, black cats, walking under ladders, rabbits' feet and other charms, Friday the 13th, Room No. 13 and Floor No. 13 skipped in hotels and other buildings, four-leaf clovers, horsehoes for luck, giving away the bride, and what not more. The custom is dying out now, but most of us will remember having seen at one time or another a picture of the saddled horse of a dead soldier led behind the caisson to the grave. This is now a purely symbolic action, but in Germany as late as 1842 a horse was actually buried with the departed soldier presumably to serve him in the next world as slaves, wives, pots, weapons, utensils have from time immemorial been buried with chiefs and mighty men in pagan societies.

It has been the observation of many that even leading men in the Younger Churches cherish beliefs in powers which we of the West tend only too quickly to designate as superstitious. The designation is doubtless correct in many cases. It is not that in all cases. So deeply do these beliefs root in the minds of new Christians that one of the great battles of missionary method has been fought around them, namely, the Rites Controversy in China between two orders of the Roman Catholic Church as to the legitimacy of the veneration of ancestors by Christians. We all recall the story of the Frisian chief who being on the point of baptism asked whether he would be with his ancestors after death. When told no, he stepped away from the font and remained a pagan. Rather with his ancestors in hell than without them in heaven. A few years ago, in Accra, Ghana, I read three funeral announcements in the daily papers, one a Methodist, one a Presbyterian, and the third a Roman Catholic announcement. All announced that memorial services would be held for so-and-so at such and such a time in such and such a church, and libation ceremonies at the grave would be held immediately thereafter.

WHAT I WANT PARTICULARLY TO REFER TO AT THIS time is the power of the curse as a thing deeply feared. It is perhaps the most ominous remnant of paganism that is carried into the Christian community. Belief in the curse means belief in the power of one person to pronounce a fateful and certain disaster over another person or over other persons, or over things. The classic example of this in Scripture is Balak's appeal to Baalam to curse Israel. A pagan-become-Christian who reads this account for the first time can only hold his breath until he reads what Baalam's answer is.

The power of the curse in pagan society does not lie in the objective existence of the power, for there is none. Its power lies rather in the implicit and profoundly held *belief* that the curse does have objective power. It is a purely subjective circumstance that makes the curse a thing to be reckoned with.

A few months ago a forest guard arrested a truck driver for taking lumber out of a forest preserve without a permit. The driver in revenge went to the man's house at night and stuck sharp sticks into the ground around it. This symbol of evil inexorably in the making completely crazed the forest guard and he had to be hospitalized. To call a man a bad name in Africa is infinitely worse than to say in America "God damn you." In America it is not seriously believed that this is more than an emotional vent. In Africa fear of the dreadful reality spoken by the invective is apt completely to upset the recipient of it. While I do not wish to speak dogmatically here, I would suggest that the commonly held belief by African Christians that they will die unsaved if they die while under Church discipline is traceable to their conception of the curse.

What is this conception? Fundamentally, I believe, the conception goes back to something deeply right and true, namely, the convertibility or equality of word and deed in God. His word is a creative word. It is a powerful word. It is a word which fully achieves what it intends. "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there *was* light." Another form of this thought is the equality with which Scripture regards God and the Name of God. Touch the name and you touch the being. Therefore, "Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain."

This equation of word and deed, of Name and Being, in God finds its reflex in man made in his image. We say that this or that person has a "good name" or a "bad name." We are pretty concerned how people use our name. When a business changes hands, no inconsiderable amount is paid for the "name" of the company that is purchased. In matters religious I need not detain the reader with our common belief in the power of the preached word, the efficacy of the sacraments (symbolic actions), and the deep correlation between the words, "This is my body," and the feeding of the soul upon the atoning work of Christ on the Cross.

In the religious imagination of paganism the correlation between word and deed is profound and universal. Its great prevalence in a pagan society arises from the fact that there is in its thinking no clear demarcation between the divine and the human, between the Creator and the creature. The divine is pulled down to the human, the human is exalted into the divine. It is for this reason that certain groves, rocks, trees, rivers, lakes, animals, men, are *tabu*, that is, laden with divine or supernatural power and therefore not to be touched or to be touched and used only with the exercise of precautions that shall restrain the power from damaging action. In paganism the human and the divine and, indeed, the natural and the divine, are inextricably intertwined. Therefore the human can in given instances and under certain conditions act with divine power. That is what makes the curse so deadly a weapon. The *word* can *act*. The *curse* has *effect*. The power of the imprecating word or of the freighted symbolic action we of the West simply have no means of comprehending. The terrible fear that is induced by them paralyzes, crazes, and even kills the African.

WHAT IS THE PASTORAL ANSWER TO ONE SEIZED BY this fear? There is certainly one answer that must *not* be given. This is to dismiss the matter as a bogey-man that Christians should not worry about. Such an answer for a person so seized is as meaningless as for a Christian Science practitioner to tell one suffering from a tooth-ache that there is no tooth to ache. Any pastoral approach that shall be helpful must seem to assume the objective reality of the curse and its power. It must be remembered that the curse cannot be believed as not having been spoken or as not having objective power. The only effective answer is to put over against the curse power a greater power which can overcome and conquer the power of the curse. This power is faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He has conquered the demons. He has overcome all the power of the enemy. He is the conqueror of sin and death and hell and all the power of the demonic kingdom. To Him alone the counsellor must point. Later, in times of calm, the matter can be talked over and an objective evaluation attempted. It must be remembered, however, that the eventual right and objective attitude to the curse power is not to be found in the gospel in abstraction from God's revelation in nature. The gospel accompanied by the general advance of culture and the exact sciences as a gift of God and as a fruit of the gospel must gradually create a general mentality in which the mind that fears the curse will at last find no room for existence. Here as nowhere else

special revelation and general revelation must go hand in hand to emancipate Satan's prisoners.

I cannot fail to observe in conclusion that the post-Christian attitude to the curse is of a decidedly lower order than the pre-Christian. The casualness with which men say "Damn it," "to hell with you," or "I'll be damned," is far worse sin than the pagan perversion of the religious fantasy. For our cussing does not bother to take the divine seriously even in a sinful way. It treats God and His power purely as instruments of personal pique. Whatever one may say of the pagan curse, and of many Christians' continuing fear of it, there is in it something of Rudolf Otto's *"mysterium tremendum"* which is abysmally lacking in the contemporary secularistic cult of the easy damn.

The Church that comes out of paganism, as indeed the spiritually most advanced Church, lives in the twilight land of the *no longer* and the *not yet.* It is no longer pagan; it is not yet all that Christ intends it to be. There is the *still here* of the old aeon and the *already here* of the new. "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death? Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord!" What Christian does not know this agony? What Christian does not know this relief? The Christian-become-pagan is indeed our brother. But the twilight is the twilight of dawn, not of eventide. The sun of righteousness has arisen with healing in its wings, and as it ascends higher and higher into the heavens of the day that God's grace gives, the shades of paganism will fall away and the light will shine more and more unto the perfect day.

Thanksgiving Day 1961

ALMIGHTY GOD, Father of all mercies, we, thine unworthy servants, do give thee most humble and hearty thanks for all thy goodness and loving-kindness to us, and to all men. We bless thee for our creation, preservation, and all the blessings of this life; but above all, for thine inestimable love in the redemption of the world by our Lord Jesus Christ; for the means of grace, and for the hope of glory. And, we beseech thee, give us that due sense of all thy mercies, that our hearts may be unfeignedly thankful, and that we show forth thy praise, not only with our lips, but in our lives; by giving up ourselves to thy service, and by walking before thee in holiness and righteousness all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all honour and glory, world without end.

Amen.

MOST GRACIOUS GOD, by whose knowledge the depths are broken up, and the clouds drop down the dew; We yield thee unfeigned thanks and praise, as for all thy mercies, so especially for the returns of seed-time and harvest, and for crowning the year with thy goodness, in the increase of the ground, and the gathering in of the fruits thereof. And, we beseech thee, give us a just sense of this great mercy; such as may appear in our lives, by an humble, holy, and obedient walking before thee all our days; through Jesus Christ our Lord, to whom, with thee and the Holy Ghost, be all glory and honour, world without end.

Amen.

From The Book of Common Prayer, Protestant Episcopal Church, U.S.A.

Jesus' Secret

by Hugh A. Koops

JESUS HAD A SECRET. It was no accidental secret, a secret that He never got around to telling anyone. It was no incidental secret, a secret that wasn't important enough to be told. Rather, it was a secret which concerned a very important fact, the most important fact in the world. Jesus' secret was that God had come into the world, that He had taken upon Himself human flesh, that God dwelt among men. This was Jesus' secret.

And Jesus wanted to keep this a secret. Time after time, when He worked His miracles of healing, He charged the beneficiaries to tell the story of their healing to no one. When Peter made his marvellous profession, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," Jesus "charged the disciples that they should tell no man that he was the Christ" (Matt. 16:16, 20). After the events on the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus commanded the three disciples, "Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead" (Matt. 17:9).

Of course, Jesus could not keep His secret from the demons. They knew who He was. The unclean spirits said, "I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God." But Jesus said, "Hold thy peace." When the demons cried, "Thou art the Son of God," He rebuked them. "He suffered them not to speak, because they knew that he was the Christ" (Luke 4:34f., 41).

Evidently Jesus wasn't interested in having the demons for His missionaries, even when they were speaking the truth. Nor was Paul. A young girl followed Paul and Silas through the streets of Philippi calling out, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who proclaim unto you the way of salvation." No devil ever spoke truer words, not even Satan in the garden when he assured Adam and Eve that eating the forbidden fruit would give them the knowledge of good and evil. But the truth, when it comes from the devil, is not used by God. The demon is commanded to come out of the young maid (Acts 16:16ff.).

But why? Why does the devil speak the truth? And why does God forbid him to speak the truth?

The devil is crafty. He will not be caught telling a lie. Rather, he will use the truth to spread a falsehood. He will call Paul and Silas "servants of the Most High God" in order that they may be confused with all the religious peddlers in Philippi who spread their peculiar "ways of salvation." And he will call Jesus the Christ before the time is full; he will offer Jesus the kingdoms of the world before the cross. He offers God a "short-cut" in order that he may "short-circuit" the dynamic of the kingdom.

But Jesus is not as impatient as the devil. He bides His time. He keeps His secret. The world is not yet ready for the truth. The way must be prepared. And Jesus quietly and calmly prepares the way. Only after countless hours of ministry does He ask, "And who do ye say that I am?" He does not place the words in their mouth by asking them whether He is the Christ. They must come to this realization quite apart from His providing the label. And when they make the momentous discovery, He cautions them into silence. Only the disciples are prepared to know.

There is no word more misunderstood in all Palestine than the name *the Christ.* That name evokes visions of the grandeur of the reigns of David and Solomon. It brings forth the image of a king, mighty in battle. It is a call to battle, and a guarantee of victory. It has but to be mentioned, and the pious, patriotic Jews already see the Roman army in retreat. This is what the Jews mean when they hear the title *the Christ.*

But this is not what Jesus means. Slowly the disciples learn that this is not what *the Christ* means to the Christ Himself. To be *the Christ* means to suffer and to die, and it means to rise again. But there is no way to teach the multitude this, other than to suffer and to die, and to rise again. The disciples "tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen from the dead." The meaning of the name cannot be given by teaching and preaching; it can be imparted only by living. So Jesus keeps His secret, until the time has fully come.

And then the Christ is proclaimed. The victory is not over Rome; it is a victory over death. Now the secret is out. Jesus is the Christ. The devil told the truth to spread a falsehood; Jesus withheld the truth that the truth might be fully known.

TODAY THERE IS NO NAME MORE MISUNDERSTOOD than the name *Christian.* To some it refers to a self-selected group who have withdrawn from this world to wait for the next. To some it refers to a certain code of practices, often ascetic, forbidding many of the pleasures of the world God made. To some it refers to the attempt to recapture the beliefs and attitudes of the first century in the middle of the twentieth. To many others it means nothing more than a term for the dominant mood in Western civilization.

Regardless of what it means to us, or anyone, the question stands: Is it at all beneficial, in the post-

Christian age, to use the name *Christian?* May it not be as dangerous as it was for Jesus to use the name *Christ?* And if it is, are we as ready as He was to accommodate Himself to the ignorance of His age?

One thing is sure. To fill the name with its proper meaning will not be accomplished by preaching and teaching alone. Christians will have to live in the world, if they are to make any judgment upon it. And they will have to bear that judgment, never self-righteously avoiding the condemnation of the world. They will suffer for the world. Many will die for the world. And they shall rise again.

What the world needs today is not only the *vocal* message; it needs the *vital* ministry of Christians. Christians can bring the word, but that word must become flesh in their own lives. We don't have to go around calling ourselves Christians. Too many of us have already thus abused the name of our Lord. We can leave all "name-calling" to others.

It's much easier to be a "devil" of a missionary. Then all you have to do is speak the truth.

Infallibility 1961

by Marvin Hoogland

THE 1961 SYNOD OF THE CHRISTIAN REFORMED Church is a matter of history; a committee's report on the relation of inspiration and infallibility has been received with general if not absolute approbation; the protests against the Seminary President were in the main found to be unsubstantiated, and the President was reappointed for another year. Barring possible protests and appeals to the Synod of 1962, the ecclesiastical aspect of the controversial question of infallibility has been settled. With no one in the Seminary community any longer under ecclesiastical fire, the issue may lose much of its interest as far as some are concerned; the sensational — but only external — aspects of the issue are over. It may be that many of us are tired of the whole question and would prefer to see it dropped. The temptation to bury the whole matter and let it rest in peace is attractive. If everyone would be willing to forget the issue, misunderstandings that have arisen would disappear or at least remain dormant. The only difficulty with this kind of approach is that any real understanding might disappear along with the misunderstanding, and further gains in understanding the implications of inspiration and infallibility would be rendered less likely.

The decision of Synod to "commend" to the church the report on "Infallibility and Inspiration in the Light of Scripture and the Creeds" is evidently intended to counteract the understandable inclination to leave the issue interred in the *Agenda* and *Acts* of Synod. The hope of Synod is that the report will "serve to remove misunderstandings that have arisen" and will be "a framework for further study of the relationship of inspiration and infallibility." If the synodical report can effectuate both of these objectives, it will perform a notable service in the church. In view of the general approval given to the report by nearly everyone interested in the infallibility question, there is good reason to believe that much of the misunderstanding that arose either already has been or now can be removed. Even though the report itself does not resolve all the differences which exist among us, it does provide a wide and fundamental basis on which all of us can stand without reservation and without distrust of one another. The report has apparently set the mind of the church at rest and should create an atmosphere conducive to our carrying on further discussions and airing differences with mutual confidence in one another. On the assumption that that atmosphere has already been created, I proceed to express and defend certain conclusions which I feel the synodical report warrants.

THE REPORT EMPHATICALLY MAINTAINS THAT SCRIPTure in its whole extent, in all its parts, and in all its words is infallible, that is, non-deceiving, inerrant, and non-failing. It indicates, however, that in understanding the meaning of infallibility we cannot appeal to any simple or self-evident definition of the term. The content of the term can be supplied only from Scripture itself. Thus the report states, "Initially we may say that infallibility as an inference drawn from inspiration is to be ascribed to Scripture only in accord with the extent, nature, and purpose of inspiration" (*Agenda,* 1961, p. 151). In extent it is "both plenary and verbal," in nature "organic," and in purpose such as "to constitute Scripture a trustworthy 'rule of faith and practice' " and "a self-revelation of God" (pp. 151-153). Scripture "centrally and pervasively witnesses to Christ and the way of salvation which God has both wrought and supremely revealed in Him. It is for this purpose and *for this purpose only* that Scripture makes use of Scripture, and it is from this perspective and *this perspective only*

that Scripture makes claims for itself" (p. 156, italics mine). Infallibility applied to Scripture, therefore, has meaning only in relation to the "revelatory purpose" of Scripture. The report comes to this conclusion after examining the Scriptural testimony about itself, and it comes to the same conclusion after examining the witness of the Creeds: "The adequacy, perfection and sufficiency of Scripture is geared to its redemptive intent and purpose, *which is also true of its infallibility*" (p. 194, italics mine). There is no question of applying this kind of infallibility only to certain parts of Scripture to the exclusion of other parts, for Scripture has a redemptive intent and purpose in its whole extent and in all its parts.

Having defined infallibility exclusively in terms of the redemptive purpose which pervades the entire Scripture, the report goes on to consider "the question whether or not the word infallibility adequately conveys Scripture's claim to its own trustworthiness." This question, the report insists, "can be confidently answered in the affirmative." Those who have followed the infallibility debate from the beginning will recall that it was precisely this question that was raised in "Infallibility Questioned," *Stromata,* 1958. There the suggestion was made that the word *infallibility* does not adequately convey Scripture's claim to its own trustworthiness, since it implies something more or other than Scripture claims for itself. This suggestion was further developed (or modified) in the conclusion to "Infallibility and the Reformed Tradition," *Stromata,* November 1958, by the italicized comment "*If the term infallible is to be at all useful in conservative theology, it must be very precisely defined and limited to a theological context.*" The synodical report explicitly and very pointedly rejects the suggestion of "Infallibility Questioned" that the term *infallible* is inappropriate, but only after defining and limiting the concept to the theological context of the redemptive intent and purpose of Scripture. By tenaciously maintaining this limitation of the meaning and application of infallibility to Scripture, the report places the question of infallibility in its proper perspective. Within this framework set by the report further study and progress in understanding the implications of infallibility can be stimulated.

But does defining infallibility in terms of redemptive purpose and intent of Scripture really place any limitation on the Scriptural meaning and application of infallibility? Certain expressions in the report, taken by themselves, would seem to rule out any limitation. For example, the report asserts this conclusion:

> As an inspired "rule for faith and practice" Scripture must be supposed to speak with divine trustworthiness on all matters . . . on which Scripture claims to speak authoritatively. And the area of Scripture's authoritative speaking cannot be limited or restricted in any way except by the actual speaking of Scripture (p. 153).

Similarly, a few pages later the report states, "But in communicating this redemptive self-disclosure of God Scripture claims to speak authoritatively on all matters on which it finds necessity to speak." This states, in effect, that no matter what Scripture speaks on, it speaks with absolute authority and infallibility. In itself there is no objection to putting the matter this way, except that it is ambiguous and can be quite misleading. Once it is recognized that Scripture does intend to speak on a given matter of fact, we must assume that it speaks infallibly. But whenever we face a difficulty of this kind, the question that arises is whether Scripture intends to speak on the particular matter involved. Take an example referred to on pages 131-132 of the report. In Acts 13:19 Paul states that the number of nations whose land Israel inherited was seven, taking his figure from Deuteronomy 7:1. Is Scripture here speaking on the matter of fact regarding how many nations there were? Our first impression is likely to be that Scripture is obviously speaking on that matter of fact, since the words are clear. But when we see that elsewhere the Old Testament speaks of ten nations, we must conclude that Scripture's intention was not to speak about a matter of fact we first thought it was speaking about. In this way the report forewarns us not to be too hasty in deciding on what matters of fact Scripture "finds necessity to speak."

When the report proceeds to apply *this* understanding of infallibility concretely to Scripture, the limitation which the redemptive purpose of Scripture places on infallibility is clearly seen. In terms of the precepts, doctrines, promises and predictive prophecies of Scripture we must confidently expect perfect consistency, compatibility, and trustworthiness (pp. 156-157). Without qualification Scripture is speaking of the will of God for men when it gives these. But we find a different kind of accuracy and consistency when we turn to the historical, psychological, and phenomenological facts given in Scripture. The demand here is only that "we must confidently expect that Scripture possesses such 'accuracy' and such 'consistency' as is required by the Spirit's purpose for speaking of such facts" (p. 157). The reason a different kind of accuracy is demanded here is that these kinds of facts have no independent revelational significance in themselves, as precepts, doctrines, and promises do, but have significance only as a *means* toward communicating the self-disclosure of God. Hence we have no right to demand strict accuracy, inerrancy, and consistency in the sense that "the historical, psychological or phenomenological statements of Scripture conform precisely . . . to event, or circumstance or nature or parallel statement, but that they com-

pletely fulfill the Spirit's purpose for making these statements."

The report goes on to observe that in many cases the Spirit's purpose may in fact require such precise conformity to event, circumstance, nature, or parallel statement, but it calls this "a further kind of accuracy," one demanded not by infallibility but only by the Spirit's intent and purpose. But if the Spirit's purpose does not require this further kind of accuracy, we may not demand it (p. 157). In quoting the Old Testament, the New Testament sometimes bases a point on the tense of a verb, the number of a noun, or a very minute detail of historical fact, but may we generalize and make these examples of precision indicative of the nature of the precision and infallibility required in every instance? The report, at least, appears to refute this kind of reasoning.

The synodical report thus makes clear that words like *accuracy, consistency,* and *inerrancy* have an important qualification when they are applied to the historical, psychological, and phenomenological statements of Scripture, namely, "such . . . as is required by the Spirit's purpose for speaking of such facts." In other words, beyond the limits of that qualification the statements of Scripture do not necessarily exhibit the qualities of accuracy, consistency, and inerrancy. Judged from the point of view of modern historiography (see p. 184) without regard to the purpose and intent of the Spirit, some historical statements in Scripture may be inaccurate or in error. But "*from the point of view of their respective contexts and the purpose of Scripture they are wholly accurate so that through them the Spirit speaks with absolute authority and absolute trustworthiness*" (p. 158, italics in report). What from a Scriptural point of view is accurate and inerrant need not be accurate and inerrant from a *merely* historical point of view. But the report goes on to make clear that this acknowledgment by no means warrants any allegation of error against Scripture, for when we abstract statements from Scripture and judge them by standards other than the Scriptural one, we are really no longer talking about Scripture. "To speak of 'inaccuracy,' 'error,' or 'inconsistency' is to speak unscripturally of Scripture and can be done only when Scripture is subjected to criteria which are not appropriate to Scripture" (p. 158).

CAN WE, THEN, SPEAK OF HISTORICAL INACCURACY and error in Scripture or not? No, the report insists, we cannot. We might say that there are historical inaccuracies in Scripture only in the same sense that there are *nonsense* statements in Scripture. Many statements in Scripture are complete nonsense when judged from a strictly literal point of view, for example, that God has wings under which we can take refuge (Psalm 91:4). This "admission" of nonsense in Scripture, however, obviously does not allege nonsense against Scripture. In the same way, many of the statements in Scripture may be inaccurate, inconsistent, or in error when judged from a *merely* historiographical point of view. But also in the same way, this "admission" of inaccuracy in Scripture by no means alleges inaccuracy or error against Scripture.

Seen in the light of the entire report, the final section on the "periphery" question becomes intelligible. Inspiration and infallibility both extend to the very periphery of Scripture. Understanding infallibility as it is defined and explained throughout the report, it is clear that the report desires to say (though it doesn't do so explicitly on pages 192-193) that we cannot speak Scripturally about inaccuracies, inconsistencies, and errors on the periphery of Scripture's teaching. Infallible in "its whole extent, in all its parts, and in all its words" applies to the periphery as well as to the *centrum* of Scripture. Those "incidental and circumstantial data which has [*sic*] no independent revelational significance" are wholly accurate from the point of view of their Spirit-intended purpose in Scripture. The fact that they may be inaccurate from some other point of view does not affect their Scriptural inerrancy. Inaccuracy enters the picture only when such data are considered independent of their respective contexts and the purpose of Scripture.

The report, therefore, supports the conclusion that it is possible to look at inaccuracy from more than one point of view, and consequently that it is possible to speak of historical inaccuracy while at the same time maintaining Scriptural accuracy in terms of *sacred* history. That is, what is seen as inaccurate from a *merely* historical point of view is recognized as wholly accurate for the reporting of sacred history. This conclusion being established by the report and the report serving as the larger context in which the synodical declaration of 1959 must be seen (p. 190), it becomes evident that the "actual historical inaccuracies" ruled out by the Synod of 1959 has reference to historical inaccuracies from the point of view of sacred history and not from the point of view of modern historiography.

A QUESTION WHICH THE REPORT DOES NOT ANSWER — presumably because it was outside the scope of its mandate — concerns the degree of difference which may obtain between the accuracy required by modern historiography and the accuracy required by sacred history in Scripture. To what extent does the revelatory purpose of sacred history allow for (merely) historical inaccuracy? On the one side, we are assured that the facts asserted in Scripture need not show precise correspondence with event, circumstance, nature, and parallel statement. On the other side, we are warned that no inaccuracy

of this kind must jeopardize the historical trustworthiness of Scripture. Within this framework the report carries on its discussion of infallibility, and within this framework Synod asks us to continue studying the relationship of inspiration to infallibility. One of the questions within this framework is where the permissible lack of correspondence with event, *etc.*, leaves off and the jeopardizing of the historical trustworthiness of Scripture begins. The report does not address this question. To what extent a precise answer is even possible may be a matter of discussion. But as long as the discussion is carried on within the framework established by the report and commended by Synod, we can at least be certain that it is carried on within the framework of Reformed commitments.

National Day of Prayer?

by George Stob

THE PEOPLE OF THE UNITED STATES WERE SUPPOSED to have united in a National Day of Prayer on Wednesday, October 4. It is doubtful that they did. It is fairly certain that the day was more widely ignored than observed. If one should ask why that is so, it may be said in part answer that the American people did not know they were supposed to pray, much less did they know why they should pray at this time and for what.

But there was an officially appointed Day of Prayer, and the first Wednesday in October had been so designated for nine years running. As long ago as April 17, 1952, the Congress of the United States resolved that a National Day of Prayer should be set aside for annual observance. The Congressional Act required that "the President shall set aside and proclaim a suitable day each year, other than a Sunday, as a National Day of Prayer, on which the people of the United States may turn to God in prayer and meditation at churches, in groups, and as individuals."

There is no evidence that this day has been generally observed, or that it has become a part of the pattern of our national life in any significant sense. We have no cause to sit in judgment on our fellow countrymen, however, because it does not appear that the Christian Reformed Church took any note of National Day of Prayer until 1957, when the Synodical Committee called attention to the Presidential proclamation for that year, and suggested that our churches might observe it as they saw fit. And National Day of Prayer did not make its appearance as a day for special observance in the Church Calendar of our Yearbook until the year 1959 — seven years after the Resolution of Congress and the first Presidential Proclamation.

IN THE YEAR 1958 TWO CLASSES OVERTURED SYNOD to designate National Day of Prayer as a special day of prayer to be observed in all our churches in the United States. In response, the Synod of 1958 decided "to designate the national days of prayer which are or may be proclaimed by the respective governments which God in His Providence has placed over us, as special days of prayer to be observed by our churches in the United States and Canada respectively." The ground given was that "these are days of national significance. Our churches must be open to our congregations and our fellow-countrymen on such occasions, when God in His Providence leads those in civil authority to call our citizenry to pray. We must pray for and with our country" (*Acts* 1958, p. 27).

It may be assumed that since 1958 the day has been observed more or less faithfully in the Christian Reformed Church. It has seemed a strange day, however, because this "national" observance has been a fairly private one. Christian Reformed Churches in their observance of it seemed something of an oddity, since it did not appear that any other part of our national community paid any attention to National Day of Prayer. But it is not good for us to pray alone, because, however much of credit this may be to Christian Reformed piety, it sorely reduces the meaning of a Day of Prayer in which the *nation* is supposed to be united.

There is something wrong with National Day of Prayer. There is not yet cause to cry with alarm for evidences of national apostasy, because there are many thousands of American Christians who love the Lord as much as we do and are as deeply concerned as we are that He might bless us in the needs by which we as a nation are confronted. There is something else wrong with our National Day of Prayer, and what is wrong may no doubt be found in factors that accounted for our own ignoring of that Day of Prayer for some six or seven years.

WHAT IS WRONG? ONE THING THAT IS WRONG WITH our National Day of Prayer is that it seems to be a day without adequate point as a day of national religious observance, since it bears no relationship to significant national events, or to long-standing national traditions; and as an arbitrary date it is without the urgency of reference to a national emer-

gency. There is some point to National Thanksgiving Day because it is a calendar holiday whose observance stands rooted in the traditions of our colonial forefathers and stands related to the harvest which calls for recognition of God's faithful bounty. There is similar point to the observance of New Year's Eve, New Year's Day, and the Day of Prayer for Planting, because they stand in the context of significant moments of Providence.

I suspect, however, that Christian people in the United States and even in the Christian Reformed Church will not feel greatly moved to special prayer observance on an arbitrary first Wednesday in October. Prayer in solemn assembly is something to which people are most effectively and most piously moved not by fiat but by a sense of the providential propriety or urgency of it. When such propriety or urgency seem to be lacking, one can understand that people are not particularly alert to a call to prayer on a day "other than a Sunday."

The second thing that is wrong with our National Day of Prayer is that the civil authorities from whom the call comes do not themselves seem to be very much concerned that the people of America shall be urgently moved to gather for prayer. We are supposed to come together in prayer, so the decision of the Synod of 1958 rightly indicates, when "those in civil authority call our citizenry to pray." But the appointment of National Day of Prayer has surely been quite less than a "call."

A call to a nation to be united in prayer ought to have something of clarion quality. But there was nothing clarion-sounding about the call to National Day of Prayer. It might, indeed, be noted that ignorance concerning it on the part of the vast majority of the American people was due to the fact that they heard no call, clarion-sounding or otherwise. Christian Reformed churches have been alerted to the possibility of a call to some "suitable day" by the occurrence in the Church Calendar of notice of an October 4 observance. But it took some sleuthing by Christian Reformed ministers, by way of inquiries to perplexed and embarrassed newspaper staffs and Councils of Churches, and by way of long-distance telephone calls, to discover that the President of the United States had indeed issued, or was to issue, a Proclamation calling to Prayer. After borrowing, at the suggestion of one of our ministers, from *The New York Times* (the paper that publishes "everything fit to print," which the Presidential Proclamation obviously was), one of the local Eastern newspapers published the Presidential Proclamation on the afternoon of October 4 under the caption: "Presidential Proclamation on Today's Day of Prayer." This would seem to be a fairly late notice to the American citizenry. Even *The Banner* notice of the Presidential Proclamation did not come to the attention of most people in the East until after the last Sunday on which announcement could have been made.

Did the President really and urgently want the American people to pray, or have the Presidents since Harry Truman found themselves in the position of having to protect political advantage by continuing a day once set and now politically risky to ignore completely?

ON MATTERS OF NATIONAL RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE, civil authorities may be thought to need some guidance and instruction from the churches and the religious leadership in our country. In this instance it would seem to me neither improper nor profane to ask the President to re-examine the necessity or advisability of such a day as National Day of Prayer. If discontinued, it surely would not leave the country without the grace of Christian intercession in critical moments. We gather in response to God's call each Lord's Day in God's House, moved, among other things, to "supplications, prayers, intercessions, thanksgivings . . . for all men; for kings and all that are in high place; that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and gravity." In addition we gather for solemn prayer on our own behalf and on behalf of our countrymen and all our fellow men on such special days as Prayer Day, Thanksgiving Day, New Year's Day. And we surely expect that in times especially critical the Christian people of America will gather for special prayer at the President's call and even without it.

Is there good and proper reason for adding another National Day of Prayer on a quite arbitrary date? Is there any particular saving grace or religious virtue in another day of prayer, held beyond the fifty-two Lord's Days, because it is a call to prayer by the President of the United States on "a day other than Sunday"? Perhaps we ought to stop and consider that "the calling of assemblies," to which only formal observance is given, or which come under judgment because subject to formal nonobservance, also belong to the thing which, as Isaiah noted, the Lord abominates.

It is possible, however, that national and religious leaders in America consider National Day of Prayer as something too important to discontinue. If that be so, let them treat it with more care and put it in a more significant framework than has been characteristic of the practice of the past. And let it be said again that whatever of gratification may be supplied to our conscience when we observe a day which most others ignore, we ought not to be satisfied to continue so. As the Synod of 1958 observed, "we must pray . . . with our country," and not alone.

And if it is important that National Day of Prayer be observed, we should know that there is something needful beyond holding National Day of Prayer ourselves and opening our churches to

our fellow countrymen, and that is that everything possible should be done so that our fellow countrymen in their own churches join with us and all the nation in the prayer to which the Chief Executive calls. It would be well that on the national level and as well on the community level we should urge the Councils of Churches to give due publicity to the National Day of Prayer and exhort all their member churches to its proper observance. And we should not leave aside a communication to the President urging him to see to it that through the office of the Presidential Press Secretary all the nation shall hear, and in sufficient time, the President's call to prayer.

For on days of solemn national convocation, Christians must pray not only *for*, but *with* their country.

Which Belgic Confession? (III)

by Leonard Verduin

IN EARLIER ARTICLES IN THIS SERIES WE HAVE SEEN that the Belgic Confession was ready for the printer in 1559; that it was not printed at that time because they of Geneva were against it; that in 1561 it was printed nevertheless; and that it was then subjected to a drastic revision in 1566, presumably to arrive at a text more acceptable to Sacralism.

It must be remembered that around the year 1566 the Reform in Flanders underwent a drastic change. From 1566 dates the coalition between disgruntled Nobles and the Consistories. "Prior to *het wonderjaar*," to use the words of the Belgian historian Pirenne, "the Reformed had carried on without the least contact with the leaders of the political revolt"; after 1566 that was no longer the case. Charles Paillard, another Belgian scholar, perhaps the greatest expert in the sources of this area and period, has pointed out that "for those who address themselves to the history of the Low Countries in the second half of the 16th century nothing is as important as an awareness of this coalition." The Belgic Confession, notably its 36th Article, was caught in the cross currents of this mighty change.

These were the days of "the fiery field preachers from the South" — to employ an expression we owe to Motley.[1] With them came the new formula, the formula of Reform-espoused-by-ruler; along with their arrival began the flirtations between the confederated Nobles and the Consistories. The Nobles were for the most part financially embarrassed; the circles of the Reform embraced some of the richest people of the times — Marcus Perez, for instance, the richest man in Antwerp.

But the Nobles soon discovered that the native sons were not easy to gain. The idea of Reform-by-ruler was quite foreign to their thinking; and the thought of armed rebellion was repugnant to them. If the coalition were to succeed, new blood would have to be imported; and for this the Nobles looked to the South, where the new formula had already made much headway. With the coming of these imported men, for whose travelling expenses the Nobles had provided[2], the desired leadership was on hand. It is a matter of record that the circuit between the Nobles and the Reform was closed by these imports — such men as du Jon (Junius), Peregrin de la Grange, and others less well known. To du Jon, a stripling barely out of his teens, it fell to do the prayers and give the benedictions at the meetings of the conspiring Nobles. It was he and La Grange that went to the meeting at St. Thrond — over the head of the native sons.

THE REVISION SYNOD WAS DECIDEDLY IN THE SIGNATure of the new spirit, that of Sacralism. It seems to have been composed of hand-picked persons. The report has it that it consisted of the "leading" ministers, the ones who were in the lime-light, "*qui tum noti sunt.*" This is strange language in Reformed Church polity; for since when is a Synod composed of "leading" ministers, the "known" ones? Actually this looks more like an *inter nos* than a Synod in the usual sense. This may explain why it is that although we have the Minutes of several Synods held a little before or a little after, we have no Minutes of the Revision Synod. Furthermore, we are informed that Saravia was "summoned" to this gathering (the original has "*et ad quam vocatus quoque erat Zaravia*") — the Saravia who was indispensable for the business in hand, seeing that he not

1. Some Dutch writers, especially those of Calvinist persuasion, have sought to discredit Motley's representations in this matter. F. L. Rutgers, for example, goes so far as to say that Motley's "fiery field preachers from the South" existed only in Motley's imagination. The sources are heavily on the side of Motley, however. The views of Uytenhoven, one of the first to relate the history of Protestantism in Flanders, are essentially correct: "In 1562 French refugees of the Reformed faith . . . began to incite the spirits of the Dutch Protestants and to transmit to them their spirit."

2. This we know from the reports of Philip's intelligence service. From a report printed, in the original Spanish, by Gachard in his *Correspondence de Philippe II*, Vol. II, p. XXV we read that the Nobles promised the ministers they sought to import "*que les daran las costas de Geneva a Flanders.*" They also agreed to pay their salary.

only knew all about Geneva's strictures but was also "on the right side." Is this also a straw in the wind? In Reformed usage no specified minister is "summoned." One wonders also whether the very word "occult" as it stands in the report does not carry a special meaning; every church gathering was occult in those troubled times; was this meeting perhaps occult in the sense that not every one was "in the know"?

Most important of all is the fact that this was a semi-political gathering — as is every religious assembly in a Sacralist situation. Marnix was there; Louis of Nassau, the Prince's brother, likewise; the Count of Culemborg and the Count of Bergen; also Henri Brederode, seldom-sober spendthrift that he was; and "others of the Nobility." Truly this was a semi-political rally. The first signers of the Revised Version were a motley crowd; for, we are told, all these politicals were among the first signers.

PROTESTANTISM IN FLANDERS WAS AT THIS TIME also providing itself with a new referee. Prior to 1566 it had been Emden; now Geneva begins to have the honor. In 1565 they of Flanders had felt out the "elder brother" at Emden as to the propriety of the course of action then already under advisement, a "certain controversial matter." Emden was, as could have been anticipated, not too much in love with the plan; they wanted "to know beforehand what the motivation for such a meeting is, before we can approve or praise it"; and they suggested that somebody be sent to talk the matter over with them face to face. It seems that they of Flanders had beat about the bush somewhat in the missive — no doubt because of the extreme danger involved should they speak straight from the shoulder and then have their letter intercepted — hence Emden's suggested conference.[3]

The new umpire was not so cautious or wary. Geneva knew what was in the wind and also liked it. It had recommended special prayers for the success "of this our design" as du Jon put it.[4]

And what were the native sons doing in the meantime? Where was de Brés, the man whose Confession was about to undergo major surgery? In exile of course, an exile occasioned specifically by the advent of the new Sacralism.[5] Although we know that he did sneak back into his homeland occasionally during this exile we have no reason to believe that he had anything at all to do with the Revision Synod, neither the planning nor the executing. But we do know what another of the native sons was doing at this very time, the native son upon whose advice the printing in 1561 had taken place, de Brés' friend and colleague — Godfrey van Wingen. He put across the presses a new printing of the text of 1561[6] — in the year 1566! A mighty queer situation this. On the one hand a "Synod" assembled "in spite of innumerable difficulties and dangers" because of a supposedly urgent need for a revised text — and on the other hand a minister in the same communion seeking to perpetuate the old text by providing a new printing thereof. This testifies to the presence of tension, such tension as is inevitable when two systems as irreconcilable as Sacralism and Compositism challenge each other.

As we well know, the new spirit gained the day. Especially among the lower strata of society the new ideas found easy entrance. And wherever the new spirit became operative there dissatisfaction arose, dissatisfaction with being bound by a creed that belonged to the past not only but one that had not had the benediction of the protagonists of the new spirit. In their four-volume work on the history of the Reformed Church in the Netherlands Ypey and Dermout report on this dissatisfaction in these words: "Just prior to the Synod there seems to have been some grumbling [*eenig gemor*] on the part of a faction in the Reformed community, men who felt that the Confession ought not to be commonly accepted in view of the fact that the Genevan theologians had not approved it in 1559." It appears that the true reason for Geneva's veto had become mixed with other and less-than-true reports; for Ypey and Dermout go on to say: "But the common people didn't know the real reason for that veto; and so it was thought best to present the Confession a second time to those of Geneva"[7] — after a significant revision of course, otherwise there would have been simply a second vote.

WE HAVE ALREADY SEEN THAT ONE OF THE NATIVE sons, van Wingen, was not in favor of the revision, for he tried to give the older text a new lease on life. Although as time went by the older school of thought lost out, yet there were evidently men who continued to think of the text of 1561 as the text by which they were bound. This appears from a question posed at the Provincial Synod of Dordt (1574) by Classis Walcheren, which wanted to know "whether it is not needful to take the Con-

3. Meiners, *Oostvrieschlandts Kerkelijke Geschiedenis*, I, 410f.

4. Cf. du Jon's *Vita Junii*, Paragraph 41.

5. De Brés' first serious scrape with the law was the direct consequence of the *Chanteries*, nightly singings in the street. These were instigated by agitators from across the border. As such they were an early manifestation, perhaps the very earliest, of in-coming Sacralism. This explains why Margaret of Parma was so deeply concerned about them. Her Committee of Investigation managed almost to enclose de Brés in its dragnet. He got out just in time; but he was burned in effigy and a price was put on his head. It is significant that de Brés had no part in the Chanteries and that he was deeply irked by them.

6. There is a copy of this printing in the Bibliotheque Royale at Brussels (No. 26451 of the so-called *Hulthem Collectie*).

7. *Op. cit.*, I, 448.

fession in hand and make it conform to the edition lately put out by Master Beza?" From this it is apparent that not all ministers were using the revision of 1566 (here styled "the edition lately put out by Master Beza"). The intention of Classis Walcheren apparently was to make these die-hards join the rest in giving 1566 the right of way. But Synod, presumably averse to forcing the issue, decided "for certain reasons to let the matter rest until the General Synod." The Sacralists could afford to mark time; for time was on their side.

Since we do not have the Minutes of the Revision Synod we do not know precisely how the text was made to read there. All we know for sure is the text that was subsequently printed at Geneva. It is not out of the question that Geneva made a few changes of its own and on its own. The expression in the Schoock report "in which a few things have been altered" may refer to alterations made at Geneva. It is perhaps not without significance that the Revision came to be known as "the edition lately put out by Master Beza," language that implies that Beza had had something to do with the tenor of the text. Well into the seventeenth century men continued to hold it against Geneva that it had taken liberties with the text, a grievance that came to expression at the Great Synod of Dordt, where the delegates from Geneva requested "that the blot resting on those of Geneva for having falsified the Confession in bad faith be removed" during the sessions of the Synod.[8] Dr. H. H. Kuyper imagined that the falsifications complained of were located in Article 22 — a guess for which he does not offer any explanation — but it is more likely that the modifications complained of had taken place in Article 36.

WHEREVER SACRALISM BECOMES THE VOGUE THERE it must of necessity follow that Church and State begin to meddle in each other's affairs. Once the coalition between the Nobles and the Consistories had been effected it was inevitable that the latter would get their hands soiled with matters that do not belong on the docket of an ecclesiastical assembly. That the Flemish Protestants did not escape this evil is altogether apparent. We shall conclude this article with some evidence that they did not.

Late in 1566, in December, the Consistories of the Reformed churches of Flanders were gathered at Antwerp. A look at the Acts of this gathering will prove highly instructive.

The first piece of business before this meeting was the question "whether a part of the citizenry of the Low Countries in collaboration with a part of the lesser magistracy is permitted to resist by the use of arms their supreme ruler in the event that he breaks or fails to observe the ancient privileges, commits wrong or violence upon them?"[9] This was of course not an academic question; *het wonderjaar* was not the time for academic questions. Revolution was in the wind, as everyone sensed. And the above question was asked in order to give theological respectability to the contemplated rebellion. It might of course be argued that the question concerns an issue of right and wrong and that therefore it deserved a place on the Agenda of an ecclesiastical gathering, where "only ecclesiastical matters are to be taken up."

But the answer given to the question is passing strange. It went this way: "Yes, such is permissible if the means can be found to see it through." Not often, God be thanked, have Reformed thinkers talked thus! Not very often have they made the *licité* of a contemplated course of action to be contingent upon *le pouvoir de le executer*, not often has the permissibility of a thing been said to depend on the feasibility thereof! But the Sacralist formula opens the door to stranger things than these.

Let us read on. What kind of "means" did the churchmen of this gathering have in mind, on the procurability of which the permissibility of the thing is said to turn? The means are spelled out to us; they are "*chef ou chefz, argent, et gens*" (a leader or leaders, money, and men). The Consistories become more and more specific. "As to leaders, the most desirable of all would be My Lord the Prince of Orange — provided that he promises to maintain the public cult of the Reformed religion as laid down in the Confession." The leader if he is to be acceptable will have to give to the Reformed faith the right of way, must grant it the status of establishment. Should the Prince be unready to promise this, then he would not be an acceptable *chef*. Manifestly the Consistories were not sure as to where the Prince stood, not sure he would play along in the Sacralist proposition. The Prince was not a man who carried his heart on his coatsleeve; he was not easy to see through; but he had already given rather good evidence that if placed before the choice of Sacralism vs. Compositism he would elect the latter. In that case he would not fill the bill.

As a matter of fact the Prince did balk at the Sacralist demand — a development that made du Jon cry out in chagrin.[10] But the Consistories had prepared themselves also for this eventuality. They had added, "In the event the Prince defaults, then the Duke of Hornes and Lord Brederode, or one of these." In the course of time Brederode got the appointment, by a process of elimination, Brederode, a profligate playboy who hardly knew what

8. H. H. Kuyper, *De Post Acta*, p. 329.

9. The original of these decisions may be consulted in Bakhuizen Van den Brink's *Studiën en Schetsen*, I, 519f.

10. When the Prince declined saying he was in favor of giving every man the right to worship God as he thought best, du Jon lamented: "*Venimus, vidimus, nihil effecimus!*" (We came and we saw; but we didn't accomplish anything.)

it was to be sober — nominally Catholic at that. Strange things are happening when a group of Reformed churchmen put forward such a man as their *chef.*

Perhaps the reader is interested in a little more of the Acts of this church gathering, the decisions taken as to *argent,* money. We read a decision to raise up a committee of six Nobles "to be named by the Reformed churches," assisted by six merchants, to serve as a sort of Committee on Finances. A strong-box is ordered made, with a double set of locks and keys, so that it would take two men to get at the contents. No significant amount was to be withdrawn without the consent of the Consistories. Things were being done in a way consistent with good business practice all right.

Into this box was to be put "the moneys raised for the hiring of thirty thousand men," raised "*par cottisation*" (by pro-rated assessment), "or by some other means determined in Consistory." This takes care of *argent* and *gens.*

No doubt the hand of Marcus Perez, whom we mentioned earlier, may be seen in all this. It was also in his luxurious residence that the notorious plan known to history as the "Three Million Guilders Offer" was concocted at this time. In brief the plan was to raise money for the contemplated armed rebellion; but since to collect for such a purpose was ostensibly seditious and would therefore jeopardize the life of any and all who had a hand in the matter, it was labelled a plan to raise money "for a gift to the King if he will grant freedom of conscience." The evidence is unmistakable that this plan, to which neither Margaret of Parma nor the King ever responded, it being so palpably "*hirnverbrent*" as the German historian Rachfahl says, was a ruse from its very inception. In the early years of the Eighty Years War many a person was put to death for having functioned in the Three Million Guilders Plan.

Again, where was de Brés during all this? In forced exile, of course. But we may be sure that the political taint which the Reform he had nurtured so devoutly and devotedly was now taking on was not to his liking. He had always made a big point of it, whenever he had the ear of the rulers, that "nothing so much as hinting of sedition has ever been found with us." This claim, true enough when he made it, was now no longer in accordance with fact, thanks to the swing of Sacralism. Especially the money-raising schemes were completely odious to him. When Gilles Le Clercq, the field agent for the Three Millions deal, was in Valenciennes in the last hectic days of de Brés, and began to address the Consistory anent the collections, de Brés used the gavel to silence him, saying that he refused to become involved in such dealings.

To his last breath de Brés kept his poise and refused to be swept along with the new Sacralism. The last words to cross his lips were an admonition to his flock to "obey the duly constituted authorities, a matter in which some of you cannot have a good conscience."

And when the soldiers buried the two men who had been hanged they resuspended the body of La Grange and emptied their rifles into it but gave to de Brés decent burial, without outraging his remains. There were two schools of thought all right, as even the soldiers knew.

Although the reversion to medieval Sacralism was wrong principially, it might be argued that it was right tactically.[11] It is hard to see how the Reform of the sixteenth century could have escaped the fate that befell so many an earlier attempt at reform if it had not matched the old Sacralism with a new. Humanly speaking it does not hold forth much promise to fight with non-physical weapons a system as deeply entrenched and as heavily armed with the magistrate's weapons of steel as was the old Sacralism. Humanly speaking it seemed to be necessary to fight fire with fire, to confront the deformed religion espoused by the magistracy with a reformed religion similarly espoused. But from a principial point of view the reversion to the old medieval formula was an error, an error that later generations came to see as such. That is why they were driven, in modern times, to repudiate the Sacralist teachings of Article 36 as revised in 1566.

It is not at all strange that such repudiation appeared as the fruit of the Secession(s) in the Netherlands. With these secessions Sacralism, already on the decline, received a heavy set-back, so that the rejection of Article 36 as revised in 1566 had to follow.

Nor is it at all strange that in the United States, where the Sacralist formula had been precluded (in the First Amendment to the Federal Constitution), men were more than ready to follow suit in the matter of disowning the text that had been current since 1566.

In our next consignment we shall return to the Revision Synod and to what they did there with Article 36. This will in the nature of things be a bit technical. But we shall try to be readable nevertheless.

11. Guido de Brés would have disputed this. He was convinced that the turn to Sacralism, specifically as manifested in the Chanteries, was a big mistake, one which would cost the Reform movement very dearly. In this connection he said that had it not been for the Chanteries "our cause was completely assured." It is historically demonstrable that the Reform in Flanders, which had made amazingly good progress (such cities as Tournai and Valenciennes and Lille had become solidly Protestant) began to deteriorate upon the arrival of the new school of thought, so that today this area is again solidly Catholic. What might have been is of course always impossible to say; but certain it is that 1566 marks the beginning of the end of Flemish Protestantism.

LETTERS TO THE JOURNAL

SIRS:

The article of Mr. DeKoster in the October 1961 *Reformed Journal* entitled "Operation Suspicion" greatly disturbs me. That there may be some of Mr. DeKoster's "Citizen Keenes" at large, I will not deny. But to maintain that these are the products of the films mentioned is a false assumption. It may be that these pictures have the remote possibility of creating an unwholesome suspicion that every tree has a Red hiding behind it. Should that be the case, it is not due to the films but to the emotional immaturity and lack of common sense which the viewer had to begin with.

I too realize that an unwholesome suspicion is not warranted in combating the menace of the Communist conspiracy. But certainly we must be realistic. Let me illustrate. In a very deceptive fashion the Communist magazine *New Horizon* has reached the youth of our nation by way of the United States Department of Agriculture and the schools. I do not condemn the government and the schools for this. I attribute it to the deceitful method of the Communists. Through this avenue the Communists are poisoning the minds of our youth with their Communistic line that there is no difference between man and nature. This is one of their subtle methods to condition the mind for a Communist take-over. I do not therefore suspect everyone in the government nor every magazine I read. But I do think we ought to be realistic enough to be on guard to keep this poison from our youth. We must meet ideas with ideas. We must also take away the poison as well as present the truth.

Mr. DeKoster maintains that these films serve as a shock treatment and gives the impression that the kind of shock treatment they are is not real therapy. Again Mr. DeKoster makes a false assumption. These pictures nowhere indicate that they intend to be the complete answer on how to combat Communism. They simply alert one to the danger. This is realistic. We need knowledge and proper motivation to meet the Communist threat. How will we be moved to study unless we first know the need? How will we seek salvation in Christ, unless the moral law makes us aware of our predicament? We do not condemn the moral law because it only gives us the first step in the way of salvation. Why then condemn "Operation Abolition" and "Communism on the Map" because they only give us the first step in our way out?

Mr. DeKoster seems to indicate that these films make one suspicious of every one in our government. I don't think they do. In fact, they give us greater appreciation for them. We learn to appreciate what the House Un-American Activities Committee is doing to preserve our freedom. We look to them as authorities in the field and lend them our support. Those who condemn these pictures are generally the ones who criticize and suspect the House Un-American Activities Committee.

I am very much disturbed that Mr. DeKoster plays up what is only a remote possibility and presents it as the great danger of the hour and makes the good effect of these pictures null and void. Shouldn't we be realistic? Why didn't he present the positive good in the pictures (rather than follow "Citizen Keene" in his suspicion), which far outweighs any adverse effect they may have? The real danger to me is that we often fail to admit that Communism is subversive, subtle, and deceitful. Let's not fail to be realistic enough to take Communism for what it is. Let's not be unwholesomely suspicious, but at the same time, let's be realistic and walk with our eyes open. Failure to do this would be psuedo-liberalism.

Sincerely,

FRANK EINFELD

REPLY TO REVEREND FRANK EINFELD

I appreciate Reverend Einfeld's response, and the charity in which it is made. He is welcome to continue the discussion in these pages if my reply leaves him unsatisfied.

We do agree, it appears, on the basic matters, namely, that Communism is American Enemy Number One, and that suspicion is no real aid in combating it.

As for the rest, I think he "wants to have it both ways," as the saying goes. On the one hand, he seems to agree with me that the films do shock their audiences without offering an antidote in the way of a program of action. "They simply alert one to the danger," he says. This fact, *I said*, often leads to suspicion and its evil consequences. This fact, *he says*, in a rather startling analogy, likens these films to the moral law, because the law also makes us "aware of our predicament." What he forgets at this point, however, is that the moral law always comes to us in the context of promise and grace, as Paul amply teaches, as was persuasively argued recently in this *Journal* (July-August 1961), and as Calvin said: "If the forms of the law be separated from its end (Christ), one must condemn it as vanity." This is what I said of the films, and I simply reaffirm it now on the basis of Reverend Einfeld's own analogy.

But Reverend Einfeld wants it "the other way," too. After he agrees that the films "simply alert," he wants me to present the "positive good" in them, and says we must all be realistic enough to recognize Communist subversion.

That I do recognize Communism as subversive has been the motivation of a good deal of my writing for a long time; and this I presume Reverend Einfeld does not mean to deny. Moreover, I grant in my editorial that if an awareness of danger *is* the positive result of seeing the films, that is all to the good. But I point out that such shock treatment often has another consequence, not at all a "positive good" but rather a deepening and insidious suspicion. How often this may occur can be endlessly disputed; but I will not agree that when it does occur the fault is the viewer's. Shocks should not be indiscriminately given! Nor can I agree that I only "follow 'Citizen Keene' in his suspicion." On the contrary, I offer him in the next five pages of the same *Journal* Oct. (1961) a systematic course of reading designed

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o keep him constructively busy for a ong time, and calculated to make him nowledgeably anti-Communist.

If I find small ground for "positive good" in the films, I am in company with the nation's most distinguished newspaper, *The New York Times*, which editorialized on "Operation Abolition" on May 8, 1961, as follows:

"It gives a misleading impression that the demonstrators were organized and directed by Communists as a part of a campaign to abolish the [House Un-American Activities] Committee — with the implication that all who oppose the committee are Communist-inspired. . . .

"The fact is, however, that the demonstrators were almost entirely students who were peacefully though noisily protesting what they believed to be the committee's unfair and unconstitutional conduct and its refusal to admit them to the hearing room packed with friends of the committee.

"The only violence shown in the film is that of the police in ejecting many of the protesters from City Hall. But every one of the sixty-four who were arrested by the police has since been found innocent of wrongdoing by the courts. Neither the picture nor the commentary gives any firm evidence of Communist direction or control of the bulk of the demonstrators as is charged by members of the committee who appear on the film.

"Not only is the film itself questionable, but so also is the way it was made and distributed. It is composed of cuttings — chosen without regard to sequence — from recordings made by the broadcasting companies and subpoenaed by the committee. These were turned over to a commercial company to make the film. More than 700 prints have since been sold by the company at $100.00 each.

"This whole un-American operation by the Un-American Activities Committee is evidence not of a need of its continuance but need of its abolition — a course we have urged before."

To quote, or to make, a similar critique of the accuracy of "Communism on the Map" could, of course, be readily done. The films are "birds of a feather."

Let us, indeed, "walk with our eyes open," and study with some care what we endorse as the right weapons for fighting Communism.

—LESTER DEKOSTER

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BOOK REVIEWS

The Significance of the Church, by Robert McAfee Brown, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1956, 96 pp., $1.00)

Reviewed by HENRY BOUMA, Minister of the Christian Reformed Church, Gramm, Alberta, Canada.

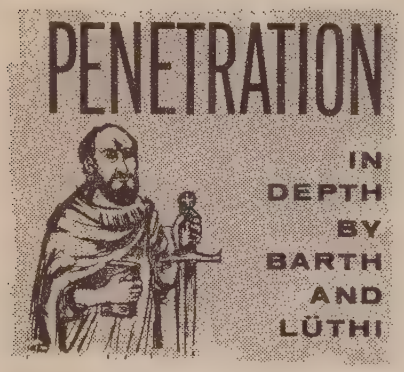
The challenge to understand the faith we confess is always great. The heritage out of which this faith grows has long roots. Thus Prof. Brown encourages his readers to look into the great heritage of the Church. In pointing to the Reformation he attempts to make the seven key doctrines relevant for our day. Prof. Brown believes that it is best to "start with the traditional words and try to explain them in terms people *can* understand" (p. 26). He goes on by pointing to the Bible which is the source and final authority for a proper understanding of the Church.

He points out that the Old and New Testaments both tell the story of the people of God. They are the Church of their time. So it is never sufficient to trace the Church back to the Reformation. "or even 'Back to the New Testament.' We must go 'Back to Abraham.' We could even say, 'Back to the Garden of Eden,' and from there, 'Back to God.' This would at least locate the foundation of the Church where it belongs — in God rather than man" (p. 34).

Once Prof. Brown has explained the heritage of the Church, he proceeds to define the concept Church. He points out that "there is no way of separating the realities 'Christ' and 'the Church.' Christ does not just leave 'changed individuals,' he leaves a community, the Church. To think of Christ is necessarily to think of the Church; he is 'the Church's one Foundation.' Conversely, to think of the Church is to think of Christ; the Church is 'his new creation.' It rests on him, not on the whims of men" (p. 47). This leads us to the great Protestant statement "*Ubi Christus ibi ecclesia* (Where Christ is, there is the Church)," which takes the place of the Roman Catholic statement "*Ubi Petrus ibi ecclesia* (Where Peter [or his successor] is, there is the Church)." The thought that the Church is a *community in Christ* is very important in this analysis.

"The world Church is a *fact,* a fact which cannot be discounted" (p. 95). It is no doubt this unity of the Church which moves Prof. Brown to take the great split (Roman Catholic-Protestant) in the Church so seriously. He warns against irresponsible types of anti-Catholicism. He goes on to advise Protestants first of all to become thoroughly acquainted with their own faith and secondly with the Roman Catholic faith before speaking. When one is well acquainted with both he should proceed with an attitude of charity and firmness. One should never act as if the difference between Roman Catholics and Protestants is of no account. Basic elements in the Roman faith "change the whole substance of the gospel. Authentic Biblical faith must be proclaimed by Protestants in their stead" (p. 63).

After this comment on the division in the Church, Prof. Brown continues his discussion of *the Church.* He points to the rich heritage which is often discarded or lost in our modern worship service. The center of worship is, of course, God rather than man. This is often lacking today. "Church services are designed to 'do us good' or give us a spiritual shot in the arm. The emphasis is all upon *us,* and what we 'get out of it.' Now worship that does not reach the participant can be very sterile indeed. But the center of attention in true worship is to be not us but God" (p. 65). "God as the center of our worship calls for a singing congregation rather than a congregation primarily entertained by a choir. The Word of God is preached and received. The sacraments are used to give grace unto His people. A prayer is not delivered to a 'Boston audience,' it is offered to God the Father Almighty." One might add that this is



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badly needed emphasis in a world which is everywhere tempted to look to itself and what life has to offer it. The idea of serving has all but left our generation. We do well to examine our own worship services. To whom are they directed?

The prophetic task of the Church, says Prof. Brown, is that of leading the world rather than following it. He notes that a congregation in a middle-class area tends to reflect middle-class attitudes, while a church in an "industrial" area tends to reflect attitudes that prevail there (p. 92). Often the community or world seems to have more effect on the church than the church upon the world. The church should be a community of people speaking on the issues of the day and the locality, saying "No!" to sin. No Christian can simply "stand at the edge looking on. He must be in the thick of the struggle, taking sides and involving himself" (p. 80). "The notion that there is a connection between loving God and going toward meetings may come as a shock" (p. 82). Another example one might add is that there is a connection between the worker's loving God and his going to union meetings, especially in a day when everyone complains of corruption and waits for the government to do something about it. The Church is a redeemed community, not simply individual "saved souls." The Church is then called to continue to live in the community and to redeem her. The true picture of the Church is that of her standing with arms outstretched in the middle of the community calling all to repentance and to renewed life.

This book is written for laymen. Written in simple prose, it is well worth reading. The author has an interesting presentation of his material. It is of vital importance for everyone to reflect on the significance of the Church. For the Church has become the most accepted institution north of the Rio Grande. Yet it often seems to be attached to our society like an atrophied limb. It does not seem to be an essential part of our community. It is very proper for one to believe in God and have one's name on a church roll but the importance of church membership is seldom considered as *vital* importance for both life and death.

I recommend this book. Read it and reflect on it in relation to your community, your church, and your membership in the Church of Jesus Christ our Lord.

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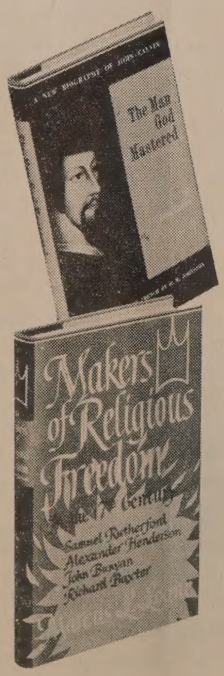

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The Devil's Advocate, by Morris L. West (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1960) 351 pp., paperback, $.60. Reviewed by JACK WESTERHOF, Student, Calvin Seminary.

The Devil's Advocate is a religious novel written in the tough but vivid style that is now becoming characteristic of many younger Catholic writers. The novel has high drama embodying significant purpose, and as such it is significant literature. It is religious literature, but not offensive religious literature: it is not the tepid, synthetic tripe that is so often, too often, labeled "religious" fiction. This religious novel does not offend because it succeeds in stretching the vitality of religion all the way from the torpor of a musty Vatican library to the godless despair of mountain villagers saturated with Nihilism. The story is one of religious revival, a revival which is effected, in part at least, by the cleric Blaise Meredith.

Blaise Meredith is the canonist of the Palace of Congregations in the heart of the Vatican. Now, apparently at the end of his days, he is a beaten man who has only months to live — months which he will spend in agony as the victim of a carcinoma. Meredith is appointed to be the devil's advocate in the ecclesiastical investigation of the moral sanctity of one Giacomo Nerone, a man whose background is doubtful, but a man whom the people of the Valley of Gemello want canonized. The people ascribe miracles to this Nerone, and it is Meredith's task to ascertain the veracity of this man's alleged power and sanctity. This investigation becomes the opportunity for Meredith, a stranger to everything but books and library routines, to participate in the life of the ruck, and, by participating in that life, to prepare for death. For him it becomes an experience which serves to temper his legalism.

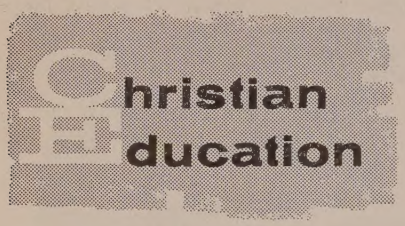
In the slow and painful process of unearthing evidence, Meredith manages, by slow inches, to expose the whole story of the alleged saint. It turns out that what we know of Nerone is that he was a British deserter of the Allied Eighth Army, who one night stumbled into the cottage of Nina Sanduzzi; that, although they never married, Nerone and Nina lived together for months; that this proud woman bore his son, Paola; that during the war years it was due mainly to Nerone that the villagers survived; and that for this service Nerone became the hero of the Valley of Gemello. The puzzle for Meredith to solve is why, when the Communist regiments invaded the Valley, these same villagers executed their hero. The key to this puzzle is the key to the mystery of the hero's character, and as author West drops clues here and there throughout the story, the hunt for the solution to the puzzle offers all the excitement and suspense of a good "whodunit."

What adds to the mystery is the strange silence of the witnesses. There is the Contessa, unloved, unbedded, childless, and frustrated. Then there is Nicholas Black, a British painter of mediocre skill, the counterpart of masculine, tough Nerone. One of the most likeable characters is Doctor Aldo Meyer, a political exile, a sceptic and a liberal. All these people come to interact with each other, and, although none of them is a human character, all of them typify, in some measure at least, a distinct philosophical-religious current of thought. Psychologically, it is West's intent to demonstrate the effect of each character on the rest.

Inquisitor Meredith, for one, arrives at a new level of religious awareness. His growing awareness of the vitality that religion can and must have, even when one plunges from the protected atmosphere of the Vatican into the weedy secularism of a mountain village, makes him a mature priest. From a wider perspective, he comes to symbolize the necessary and possible spiritual renewal of the Church. The man whose life he investigates comes to symbolize the secular world which is renewed on a different level but by the same process. What is that process? It amounts to nothing more involved than one's courageous assumption of his moral and social responsibility. Meredith the legalist learns to walk and talk with people whose problems and needs he has, quite successfully, escaped in the Vatican. Here is one level of renewal: the Church, by assuming its responsibility toward society, saves itself.

The second level of renewal is arrived at by Nerone. As Meredith continues the investigation, he reveals that Nerone was a deserter from the army not only, but a deserter from his responsibilities to life in general. However, during his stay in the Valley he came, quite suddenly, to grips with God. In one of his conversations with Aldo Meyer, Nerone indicated what the significance is of God's entrance into one's life: "If he doesn't, it's all a monstrous folly. The death means nothing, the reparation means less. We're ants on the carcass of the world, spawned out of nothing, going busily nowhere. One of us dies, the others crawl over us to the pickings. This whole Valley could freeze to death and it would mean nothing — nothing at all. . . . But if there is a God . . . everything becomes enormously important . . . every life, every death. . . ."

Doctor Aldo remains sceptical, and prescribes sleep and sex as the antidote against religion. Nerone has an answer: "You know, Meyer, that's where all you liberals make your mistake. That's



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It would have been a mere conversion story were it not for the sublime skill of West's art. It is through its symbolism that the story acquires its depth of religious and psychological significance. Tepid, goat-faced Nicholas Black, for instance, talks about his lost twin — lost in the action from which Nerone deserted. Here is a curious play on Biblical symbolism: Jacob and Esau switched. Here are two brothers: one loses his life to save it, the other hangs himself to lose it. A symbol to watch is the recurring symbol of the tree. Sometimes it is a fig tree, other times it is an olive tree, but it is always the symbol of the cross. Nerone, the believer, is tied to it, arms stretched and bleeding, to be martyred by the Communists, significantly, at three o'clock in the afternoon. The twin brother, Black, hangs himself on the tree in his despair. The one sacrifices his own life to bring prosperity to the whole community; the other creates a hell in his life and destroys himself in his death.

Such is author West's theme and style. For interest and significance they leave little to be desired. One may legitimately question, however, the unity of the novel. There are two contenders for primacy: Nerone, the alleged saint whose saintliness has to be judged, and Meredith, who has to judge that saintliness. These two persons, representative of the sacred and the secular, come to interact, but in the process the cleric loses much of his sacredness whereas the layman turns to the extreme of mysticism. A dualism is in evidence here, and not even author West gets away with it except by sacrificing a good part of the sacredness of his religion. Unintentionally, perhaps, West supports the Calvinistic concept that the sacred and the secular are, after all, one life. Inherently *The Devil's Advocate* fights its own view of Catholicism — perhaps because inherently it is a plea for a socially relevant Christianity. This book is a significant fiction. It is significant because it deals with the most compelling problem of all: the problem of good and evil in the middle of the twentieth century.

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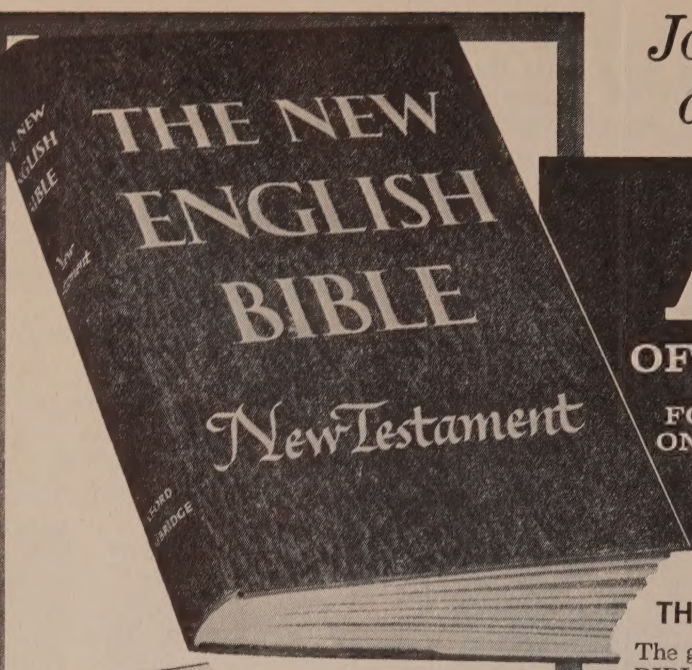

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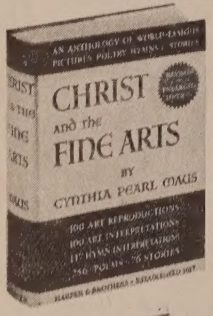

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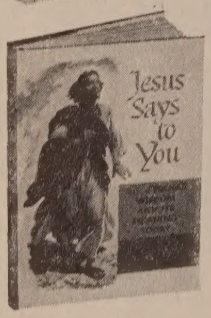

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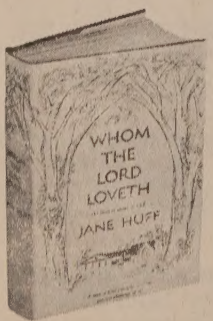

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